

www.heatonmoorunitedchurch.org.uk

## Heaton Moor United Church



The United Reformed Church and The Methodist Church  
working together in partnership



### Zoom Services and Meetings

Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> May 2020

Super Sunday at 10.00am

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84848123339?pwd=WmJHWUhUcDjtYS9VaTRJdzA4bnpmZz09>

Meeting ID: 848 4812 3339

Password: 9ZXthh

Circuit Service at 3.00pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87212246881?pwd=VXpyMzRYV21UZ1ZoYlkc2R4dmV1QT09>

Meeting ID: 872 1224 6881

Password: 974333

Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June at 7.00pm

Circuit All We Can Service

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87212246881?pwd=VXpyMzRYV21UZ1ZoYlkc2R4dmV1QT09>

Meeting ID: 872 1224 6881

Password: 974333

Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June at 10.00am

Moor Than A Good Read

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82881695155?pwd=SWkrSTV0bTg2Wm9hN29vbm90dTIjdz09>

Meeting ID: 828 8169 5155

Password: 714757

Coffee and a Prayer at 11.00am

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/95327541668?pwd=ekU2QWgzZjVKWTBFTjZsb0tERVQrdz09>

Meeting ID: 953 2754 1668

Password: 794265

Office Telephone number 07471 065729

Dear Heaton Moor United Church family,

Hope you are all doing well and are staying alert as the restrictions are easing out.

On behalf of our church, we distributed thank you cards to the shops that are open during this lock down and thinking of you cards to those shops that are closed at Heaton, we soon realised that we ran out of thinking of you cards as the shops that were closed were in majority than the shops that were opened. Please do remember in prayers those people who have been either furloughed or lost jobs because of this lock down.

As the restrictions on the lock down are easing out, discussions about church reopening are happening, the general consensus among the church leadership has been not to rush in opening the church buildings, until we receive clear guidelines both from the government and the national church about it. We need to make strict risk assessments and provide sufficient preventive measures of spreading the virus within our buildings, as and when they are ready to reopen. We are hoping to continue the circuit online services even after the reopening of the buildings. The United Reformed Church has produced a booklet titled, *Ready for the new "normal": A discussion paper for a pandemic recovery and resumption plan* aiming for the churches to prepare for a healthy future after the lock down, which is a helpful resource for our discussions.

Herewith I am sending you the reflection for Pentecost Sunday along with some worship materials for your meditations. My friend Clare and myself have written a Pentecost song which has been published this year on Singing the Faith Plus, and I am sending you the lyric as an attachment. You can also listen to this song on this link:

<https://soundcloud.com/user-155107840/a-living-pentecost>.

Here is also a link of a sketch on Pentecost, titled, "I did not know you spoke Arabic," which was written based on Acts 2, and was performed last year at our Heaton Moor United Church.

<https://thepattas.blogspot.com/2019/05/i-didnt-know-you-spoke-arabic.html>

We have a mid-week service on Tuesday, the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 2020 at 7pm, which is a service to recognise and celebrate the work of 'All We Can', and may I kindly request you to join in that service. The details of the service are on our circuit website.

May the Spirit of Pentecost be each of us and grant us peace and love during these strange times.

Thanking you,

Yours sincerely,

Raj

28<sup>th</sup> May 2020

## **A Living Pentecost**

Streets are filled with many people, voices raised in every tongue,  
Bring first-fruits of their harvest, gift to God from old and young.  
In the midst of celebration, comes a new unsettling sound:  
A cacophony of praising, Word alive, Spirit unbound!

### **Chorus:**

*God is here, speaking our language, speaking as we do,  
Christ alive, here in Spirit, and turns the tables, upsets conventions,  
Brings a new church to birth, today a living Pentecost.*

Mighty wind blows through the city, sweeps a new age into birth,  
Holy fire to burn the boundaries, and ignite God's work on earth.  
Aramaic, Persian, Coptic, Parthian, Arabic and Greek,  
Heard and understood and spoken, God in multi-lingual speak!

God is here ....

Wake up call to every nation, chaos melts, new paths made plain,  
Harvest now for new creation, these the first-fruits of Christ's reign.  
We, God's Church, arise for action, move in faith to break new ground,  
Spirit, take us to the margins where your living work is found.

God is here ....

Words and Music © 2019 Raj Bharath Patta and Clare Stainsby



# Super Sunday

Hello Friends,

Here is the zoom link for Super Sunday - 31 May, at 10am - and information about what you could 'bring' with you -

Time: May 31, 2020 10:00 AM London

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84848123339?pwd=WmJHWUhhUcDJtYS9VaTRJdzA4bnpmZz09>

Meeting ID: 848 4812 3339

Password: 9ZXthh

If you're hoping to join us, you may like to bring some of these things for our time together -

- strips of paper long enough to go around your heads, or a garden cane instead (or small stick)
- coloured paper or ribbon (red, orange, yellow - if possible - to be flames), to attach to the paper strip or cane (with sellotape)
- something to bring to a birthday party (eg a cake candle (or even a cake!), or paper plates, or ... what else?)

If you're feeling especially creative in advance, you could choose one of these different cultures - or any other language/culture - and write the word "peace" from that culture in nice big writing and colour it for us all to see -

- India ... "shanti"
- East Africa ... "amani"
- Arabic ... "salaam"
- China ... "wa"
- Romania ... "pace"
- or another one ...

Look forward to seeing you.

Hope you're well

Graham, Sheryl and Bethan



This week Raj and I popped a card into all the shops, cafes, restaurants and other businesses that are around the Heaton, letting them know we and Heaton Mersey Methodist Church are thinking of them if they are closed and to say thanks if they are open. It was a good way to do my daily steps for my 50k steps to Pentecost, though I think I was thinking of more than 5 people at the time of doing it!

Lindsay shared with me this week a way in which to benefit others whilst doing your shopping online here is what she suggests:

**Everyclick** or **Give as you Live** (they are linked)

<https://www.giveasyoulive.com/>: each search raises a bit of money and purchases made through the website by companies who donate (they have a little icon and a line saying how much they donate) and they raise variable amounts of money. Some give 4%, some 0.25%. Over the years I have raised over £543. The default charity is Christian Aid, but any registered charity can be supported, and I support a Methodist Charity, All We Can. There is a circuit service this week focusing on, All We Can. The link is on the front page of the notices.

## **The Feathers are Fastened on the Door: Birthing of a new Church at Pentecost**

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Reflecting on Acts 2:1-21

Churches have been on the news these days for all sorts of reasons. Recently on a Sunday, when zoom services were down nationally, it was reported that “churches broke the internet.” A few Bishops were on the news raising their voices against leaders who don’t practice what they preach, for which they have received death threats. In other news, a government minister was responding to a Bishop who has asked him a question as a responsible father in a similar context, “I wish him well.” On another totally different news, a video of priests performing an Irish dance at the end of their online service went viral, for it was reported that, “it lifted their spirits.” With many of the services of the church happening online these days, it was commented that, “the church building is closed, but we are open online.” On this Pentecost Sunday, all these discussions about church, directs us to reflect on the birthing of the early church as Pentecost is known to be where the Stork has dropped Church. But on my title, I have used a different imagery instead of ‘look what to Stork dropped,’ I have used an Indian phrase ‘the feathers are fastened on the door.’ In the North-East part of India, there has been a practice among the Tribal communities, for announcing the birth of a child, which is they fasten the feathers of a bird on the door outside, for the community then gets to know that a child is born in that particular family. A new birth calls for the celebration of a community. At Pentecost, as I read Acts 2, I recognise the ‘feathers are fastened on the door’ announcing the birth of a new church. Such a recognition then helps to discuss our dreams and reimaginings for the birthing of a new church during and beyond the current lockdown? By the way, the bird and her feathers represent for me that mothering Spirit under whose wings the church not only finds warmth, love and direction, but also will be like the bird travelling to unknown destinations, and whose path is ambivalent, unpredictable, intangible and elusive.

On the day of Pentecost, when the disciples gathered, the Holy Spirit came upon on them, there was fire, wind, speaking of many languages, hearing & understanding of different languages by those people living there, amazement and even criticism that they were drunk, all happening at that event. The early disciples were under different kind of lock down, living in the fear of death from the Roman empire, living in despair as Jesus is no more with them as their leader, for he ascended commanding them to be his witnesses and also living with an unfulfilled dream of seeing the messiah ruling them as a king. Amidst all of this, as the Holy Spirit came upon them, they started their life as witnesses in the public sphere, sowing seeds for what was going to be a church. Pentecost therefore was a moment for the birthing of the early church, for at that stroke, the church began to go out, and from then the early church began to grow in faith and in commitment. Allow me to discuss the goals on which the church took its birthing at Pentecost.

### **1. Birthing of the church happened on the rediscovery of inclusion:**

Who is in and who is out? This has been an age-old question that people had to address right from the days of the early church. If you have to pin down one theme that runs across the book of Acts, it would be inclusion. Soon after Jesus' ascension, the disciples brought in Mathias to be an apostle in the place of Judas. And when 'they' all gathered together, the holy Spirit came upon them. In Acts 1: 14, we see that, 'they' included the eleven disciples of Jesus, certain women, the Mother of Jesus and his brothers, and now with the new recruit Matthias (Acts 1:26), for they were all gathering in an upper room and constantly devoting themselves in prayer. Upon this community of people, the holy Spirit came down, for they all witnessed to the life and works of Jesus Christ from then on. That early church (thankfully they did not have a name/denomination for their group) was an inclusive diverse church, which included mother Mary and some unnamed women, besides men disciples including Mathias. Women did not enjoy equality due to the patriarchal society in which they lived, and so they were either excluded or forgotten. That early church was an inclusive church, which included women and men, old and young, longstanding members and a new comer. As soon as Jesus was ascended, the holy Spirit should have come upon the disciples immediately at least at Acts 1:14, but the Spirit waited till they all gathered, including the new entrant and then she came upon them. It was according to the agenda of inclusion, that the early church took its birth. This was a radical inclusion, for they had women and a new entrant apart from those men disciples of Jesus. The men disciples some fifty days ago on the Easter day, they did not trust the women disciple's testimony of Jesus' resurrection and treated that news as 'idle stories,' (Luke 24:11). But after the ascension of Jesus, I assume that the men disciples would have resolved with the women disciples and acknowledged them to be the first witnesses of Jesus' resurrections, and the Spirit of God was upon them to be an inclusive gathering.

In Acts 2: 17-21, as soon as people began to speak in diverse understandable languages, Peter stood up to speak invoking the prophecy of Joel, which further stresses the importance of inclusion in that early church. He begins his speech by calling all his audience as 'friends' (14v), where Peter builds bonds of friendship with the community gathered there. Peter, then spoke that the 'Spirit of God will be upon every one,' (17v), and everyone means everyone, for the recipients of the Spirit of God includes, sons and daughters, young people, old people, servants again both men and women, each performing their own functions of visioning, dreaming, prophesying and towards the end the Lord will perform wonders and saves everyone (21v). In that early gathering at Pentecost, we recognise that the Spirit of God breathed a breath of inclusion, dismantling all barriers informing the readers that their gathering was an inclusive gathering as the Spirit of God came upon everyone, transcending divisions and barriers, affirming and recognising the worth and dignity of all people.

One of the problems for the followers of Jesus in the book of Acts was deciding who could belong to God's people. In the book of Acts, we recognise that since Jesus came both for the Jews and the non-Jews, and that the Spirit of God wanted everyone from every nation and race to be part of God's people, explaining that the spirit of inclusion, affirming diversity was the bed-rock of the early church. The early church was birthed on the rediscovery of inclusion as its key goal.

## **2. Birthing of the church happened on the rediscovery of margins:**

At Pentecost, when they were filled with the holy Spirit, this inclusive gathering spoke in diverse languages as in Acts 2:4, we read, "The holy Spirit took control of everyone, and they began speaking whatever languages the Spirit let them speak." The wonder of Pentecost is not just in speaking different languages, but it was more about understanding those languages, for the people who heard them were excited asking each other "what does all this mean?" (2:12). With the hearing and understanding of different languages, we recognise that the birthing of the church happened on the rediscovery of including the people on the margins.

Firstly, those people who understood the diverse languages spoken on that day were migrants from every country in the world who were living in Jerusalem and were working hard in keeping the city of Jerusalem alive through their work and contributions. These migrants were the first to understand the fiery tongues of Pentecost. Imagine if these migrants were not present on that day of Pentecost, the diverse languages that the disciples spoke would have been mere waffling with no meaning and purpose of speaking in tongues. The migrants added meaning to the fiery tongues of Pentecost, for in their hearing and understanding, the tongues found their meaning. The early alphabets of the early church were to speak in the language of the 'other' and finding meaning of their speech in the understanding of the 'other.' Here it is also important to notice that at the noise of the fiery tongues a crowd gathered (6v). I assume in that gathering, there would have been some locals who did not understand what these disciples were speaking, who at the end remarked that these men were drunk. But these migrants "were surprised, because they were hearing everything in their own language." (6v).

Secondly, among these migrants some were born as Jews and others were chosen to be Jews (11v), and came from the margins of Jerusalem, the epicentre for religion and commerce. It is important to name these sites of margins, for many times in our readings we either bypass such names or overlook reading them thinking they are of no worth to the story. But by naming these sites of margins, we affirm dignity and self-respect to these people who were living on the margins. Bracketing the people on the margins has always been the logic of the empire, for their plight and struggle has either



been unrecognised or trivialised based on the prejudices of those people in power. Luke in recording these sites of margins, was giving us a clue to recognise that the early church came to birthing, finding their meaning in the hearing and understanding of those people living on the then margins. These migrant communities came from Parthia, Media, Elam, Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Libya, Cyrene, Rome, Crete and Arabia (8-11v).

I am always fascinated by the African philosophical term for community *Ubuntu*, which is translated as “I am because we are” or “humanity towards others.” I am mindful that the African scholars gives a caution in (mis)appropriation of this philosophy, but since I am short of any better vocabulary to communicate this idea, I will (ad)venture to use this African term *Ubuntu* for mutual solidarity in a community. I recognise such an *Ubuntu* in the early church, for they recognised that “they were a church because the rest of the people are there” or “they were a church because of the community around, particularly the people on the margins.” The early church rediscovered and recognised themselves as a church only in relation to the people on the margins, and their inclusion of the people of the margins has always been the ingrained DNA of the early church.

### **3. Birthing of the church happened on the rediscovery of resistance:**

Pentecost offers for me images of divine resistance. The logic of the empire has always thrived on the idea of creating ‘oneness,’ and ‘uniformity.’ The God of Pentecost resisted that idea of monopolising communities with oneness, in this case with one language. The Pentecost experience communicates an alternative politics of language. In other words, Acts 2 reflects that God has no one official language. This is the shocking revelation of the day of Pentecost, but this is often lost amid the day’s more bombastic metaphors of rushing winds, descending doves and intoxicated disciples with tongues touched by fire. Pentecost is a celebration of multilingualism, celebration of a community at its core with multicultural experiences. With the recognition and acknowledgement of multi-ethnic community with multi-languages, the early church envisaged for a diversified community and celebrated diversity in their life and practice. In those many languages spoken there, diversity was affirmed and upheld as part of the Spirit’s primary work.

The rediscovery of resistance is further understood when the God of the Pentecost resisted in speaking the majoritarian languages of their day. The God of the Pentecost resisted speaking the language of the temple liturgies of Jerusalem, Hebrew. The God of the Pentecost resisted speaking the language of the Roman empire, Latin. The God of the Pentecost resisted speaking the language of the Galilean dialect, Aramaic. The God of the Pentecost resisted to speak in the languages of the dominant and powerful, and chose to speak in the languages of the people on the margins. In such an experience the miracle of Pentecost is witnessed.

When Peter stood up to speak in a clear voice to the crowd (14v), he retells the words of prophet Joel, and mentions that the Spirit of God chooses the young people, the old people and the slaves upon whom she will be poured on. In resistance to those powerful, the Spirit of God chooses the ordinary, the weak and the outcastes to be her partners in her mission. By choosing such people, the Spirit of God was liberating them, by taking them as her partners, and by working through and in them. The young, the old and the slaves, are the people who have been vulnerable, and among them the Spirit of God dwells, which is in a way saying that church happens among and with such people.

### **Reimagining the birthing of a new church today:**

If Pentecost served as a birthing experience to the early church, which was primarily based on the rediscovery of inclusion, margins and resistance, in 2020 during this lock down, how do we reimagining the birthing of a new church today? Perhaps the rediscovery of the early church might serve as a signpost in our reimagining the church today.

1. As a church to take a rebirth today, the question that is still relevant is who is in and who is out? Who decides the boundaries? Can the boundaries be burnt by the fire of the Spirit, so that all are included, and all means all?
2. Are we as a church able to be understood by those people on the margins today? Are we speaking in languages that people in our communities are able to hear and understand? As a church how do we recognise the role and functions of migrant communities today?
3. Are we as a church subsumed by the languages of the powerful or are we joining with the divine Spirit in resisting to speak the language of the power and seek to identify with those people on margins by speaking their language?

The Spirit of Pentecost invites us to dream, to reimagine and to envision birthing of a church, that is relevant, open, resisting powers and being with and among the people on the margins. As a relevance of this reflection, I want to present to you my dream of a church for today.

Firstly, my dream is for an *Ubuntu* church, where we find the meaning of our existence only in relation to our community. "I am because we are" kind of a church. The longing of the community becomes our priority, the language that the public sphere understands today will be our communication, and the location of the margins becomes our dwelling and serving place. Secondly, my dream is for a Fluid church, which is not bound by principalities and powers, but taking its course following Jesus the living water in watering people's lives and striving to quench the thirst of the creation around. This kind of a church can be online, offline, in line and out of line, but a church which is

willing to be flown into the corners of a village and into the highways of the city, meeting people where they are and working with them for food, peace and justice. In order to achieve our dreams, we need to be open to the Spirit of God so that we are led by her and give up all that is me, mine and myself and take on we, us and together so that we can be flown as justice flows down like rivers and righteousness like an ever flowing stream. I invite you all to join in dreaming the birth of a new church today, for we need a shared vision, a bold vision and a transforming vision. The communities around us are waiting for the feathers to be fastened on our doors to announce the birthing of a new church today.

May the God of Pentecost journey with us in our dreaming, and join with us in achieving that dream, where our church takes a new birth in being and becoming a transforming community.

Rev. Dr. Raj Bharat Patta,  
Pentecost, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2020



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The  
United  
Reformed  
Church



The Methodist Church

## United Stockport Circuit (Manchester and Stockport District)

A Message from the Superintendent Minister

May 27th 2020

Dear Friends,

First of all I want to thank all of you who responded so warmly to my last letter. It is very heartening to know there is so much positivity and openness and creativity out there. Please have my reassurance that along with my colleagues we are thinking a lot about the future; both the immediate future and what things might look like when we are finally able to re-open our church buildings, but also the longer term. From the 1<sup>st</sup> September we will be joined by our friends in the Romiley circuit, to form a larger circuit, more or less co-terminus with the Borough of Stockport, and although this will bring many challenges, it will also result in many blessings as God's Spirit works through us to make the love of God a tangible reality in the lives of the people of Stockport.

On the subject of God's Spirit, as I write, we are approaching the festival of Pentecost, when we recall the moment when God's power (which had been promised by Jesus) actually came upon the disciples; it's the moment after which the disciples and followers of Jesus began their travels and journeys to share their stories and their faith with others. It was the moment after which they realised once and for all that from there on in, it was up to them, but it was also the moment that they realised they would never be alone, that in spite of his being taken from their sight, Christ would be with them always. While the disciples were busy looking up to Heaven for God's power, God's power came and found them. And it was a creative power, not a destructive power. A power of sharing, of partnership, of humility. A power which called them to communicate with one another. A power which called them, and continues to call us to take part in the ministry of Christ, not only to ensure that there IS a legacy and that all that Christ lived and died for was not in vain, but a power of grace which means that **we are** Christ's legacy, his body, not stuck in the past in Galilee or Jerusalem, but a body which is alive here and now, in this place and time, a body into which everyone is invited and in which all are made welcome. Do take a look at Acts Chapter 2. It offers a wonderful vision of a world in which difference and justice is celebrated. First of all, the Holy Spirit comes upon the disciples as tongues of fire and people from all sorts of different places are strangely able to understand each other, even though they are speaking different languages. When Peter addresses the crowd which gather as a result of this apparent mayhem, talking about Jesus and his life and ministry and death and resurrection, many people (about 3000!) found themselves changed and were baptised and began to follow the teachings of the apostles which involved gathering together, living simply, and redistributing resources to those in need. Not only does the Holy Spirit have the power to transform hearts and the lives of individuals, it can turn the normal order of things upside down.

In recent days there has been much conversation in the media about whether or not the NHS should insist that health care workers from overseas pay fees in order to access NHS services themselves. This was originally the government's policy, but an outcry from the public and many MPs lead to a change in this proposal. In the past, the many low paid ancillary workers in the health service and other key sectors have been virtually invisible. Poorly paid, and often the subject of cries directed towards those who are perceived to come into the UK and 'taken jobs which should be available to British workers'. Of course, this has never really been the case. The health service and other public services have long been dependent upon labour from overseas, and have been stronger for it, and it is my hope and prayer that one of the positive things which may emerge from the Corona virus pandemic is a re-ordering of public perception about who and what is important. Society is only ever enriched by cultural diversity. The lesson of Pentecost is that God values people, no matter who they are, where they are from or where they live. A society in which we seek to surround ourselves with those who look and think exactly like we do, and which believes that it has a monopoly on God's grace and goodness, is a society which has more in common with that which tried to build a tower towards heaven in Babel – which God destroyed – than it does with the somewhat chaotic yet vibrant scene in Jerusalem at Pentecost, which was born of God's Spirit.

After the events at Pentecost, the early Christians began to understand the very nature of God as being diverse – a God who exists and acts in a whole variety of ways. They didn't at that point name it as the Holy Trinity, that came later, yet as we read the accounts of the early church what becomes clear is their

increasing sense of God as One, yet who dwells in mystery beyond us, in grace within us, and in love between us.

And this three-in-one still can still resonate with us today. Not as an abstract doctrine, but as a way of understanding the fullness of God's presence in our lives and in the world, throughout history and into the future. Wherever we find ourselves at any particular moment in time, God can meet us there. If we are feeling confused in our life of faith, doubtful or angry at how things are turning out, then God dwells quietly, listening to our questions, speaking silently into our sense of hopelessness, unconditionally waiting and steadfastly reaching out to us for as long as it takes. If we find ourselves needing to rest in prayer, strong in our faith and seeking direction, discerning what God is willing for life, then God nudges and prods and whispers, occasionally speaking loudly, using the lives and voices of others to help us on our journey. If we feel called to reveal God's love in the world, to speak and act in the name of God's eternal justice, then God is there too, leading us on as we tread in the footsteps of Jesus. God as Creator, God as Saviour and God as Spirit live and move in a holy dance which is as dynamic as it is mysterious. There are two hymns I love to sing at this time of year, one ancient, one modern, and I will write the words here to accompany you in your own reflections. May God continue to bless you at this time, as we look towards the future and hold tight to our hopes of being able to gather again in God's name.

Come down, O Love divine,  
Seek thou this soul of mine,  
And visit it with thine own ardour glowing;  
O Comforter, draw near,  
Within my heart appear,  
And kindle it, thy holy flame bestowing.

O let it freely burn,  
Till earthly passions turn  
To dust and ashes in its heat consuming;  
And let thy glorious light  
Shine ever on my sight,  
And clothe me round, the while my path illuming.

Let holy charity  
Mine outward vesture be,  
And lowliness become mine inner clothing;  
True lowliness of heart,  
Which takes the humbler part,  
And o'er its own shortcomings weeps with loathing.

And so the yearning strong,  
With which the soul will long,  
Shall far outpass the power of human telling;  
For none can guess its grace,  
Till Love create a place  
Wherein the Holy Spirit makes a dwelling.

Bianco de Siena (d. 1434)  
*Singing the Faith no. 372*

**Refrain:** *Send down the fire of your justice,  
Send down the rains of your love;  
Come, send down the Spirit,  
breathe life in your people, and we shall be  
people of God.*

Call us to be your compassion,  
Teach us the song of your love;  
Give us hearts that sing, give us deeds that ring,  
Make us ring with the song of your love.

Call us to learn of your mercy,  
Teach us the way of your peace;  
Give us hearts that feel, give us hands that heal,  
Make us walk in the way of your peace.

Call us to answer oppression,  
Teach us the fire of your truth;  
Give us righteous souls, til your justice rolls,  
Make us burn with the fire of your truth.

Call us to witness your Kingdom,  
Give us the presence of Christ;  
May your holy light, keep us shining bright,  
Ever shine with presence of Christ

Marty Haugen (b. 1950)  
*Singing the Faith no. 413*

And please remember as always:

**In this time of isolation and separation may we feel the unity of God's spirit in the bonds of peace and love which connect us to one another.**

- 1. When we feel lonely let us know that in Christ we are never alone.**
- 2. When we feel isolated may we be reminded that within the worldwide Body of Christ we are always connected.**
- 3. When we need a hug help us to feel the warmth of God's embrace**
- 4. When we are compelled to keep our distance, may we be drawn close to each other within the Spirit of Companionship that flows from God and which moves through and between each one of us.**

With love and blessings, **Rev Cathy.**

## NOTICES

### Worship

*Forthcoming services are:*

**Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> May 3pm A Celebration of Pentecost**

**Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 7pm A Service to recognise and celebrate the work of 'All We Can'.**

*(All We Can is an international development and emergency relief organisation. Focusing on those in greatest need, it is inspired by Christian principles, and is an integral part of the Methodist family. All We Can helps find solutions to poverty by engaging with local people and organisations in some of the world's poorest communities to end the suffering caused by inequality and injustice.)*

**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> June 3pm**

You can join all our services via Zoom with a video link and see and hear everything and everyone else who is participating, or you can join just with audio, *or you can telephone in.*

Login details for *all forthcoming services* are as follows:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87212246881?pwd=VXpyMzRYV21UZ1ZoYlkwZ2R4dmV1QT09>

**Meeting ID: 872 1224 6881**

**Password: 974333**

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### ***Circuit Prayer***

In addition, every **Sunday morning at 11am** – when we would all normally be in worship in church – we are encouraged to pray the following prayer. This way we stay connected in a very really and tangible way.

**God of Love and Life,**

**We pray to you this morning for the life the United Stockport Methodist Circuit, for our sisters and brothers who belong to:**

*(pausing briefly to reflect after each name)*

**Christ Church Methodist /URC Davenport Methodist Church Dialstone Lane Methodist Church  
Edgeley Community Church Hazel Grove Methodist Church Heaton Mersey Methodist Church  
Heaton Moor United Church St. Johns Methodist Church Tiviot Dale Methodist Church  
Trinity Methodist Church Windlehurst Methodist Church**

**In this time of isolation and separation may we feel the unity of your spirit in the bonds of peace and love which connect us to one another. We worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. We ask that this time of crisis might pass and that those who suffer might find comfort and strength within the knowledge of your grace, revealed through the kindness and compassion of the people of God. Eternal God, though the self-offering of your Son you have filled our lives with your presence. Help us in our sufferings and trials. Fill us with hope and strengthen us in our weakness. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

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**A Good Society Beyond Covid-19 – Join a Conversation with local MPs on Saturday May 30<sup>th</sup> at 10.30am.**

Dialstone Lane Church have, over a few years, hosted a series of events involving local Members of Parliament focussed on the subject of 'What Makes a Good Society?' At the last gathering, just prior to the December General Election, a commitment was made to invite those elected as MPs to come back and talk about what they are doing about building a good society. Although nothing like the current situation was anticipated, there will be a Zoom version of the Good Society conversation on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> May at 10.30am. Two of the local MPs – William Wragg (Hazel Grove constituency) and Navendu Mishra (Stockport) have committed to taking part and we are just waiting to hear from Mary Robinson (Cheadle). The focus will be on how to build a good society here in Stockport, within and after the Covid 19 crisis. We will ask the MPs what they have been doing over recent months and some of the positive things they have seen – and their principal

concerns. Then we will put your questions to them.

**If you would like to join in, please contact Andy Stoker (andy.stoker@btinternet.com) to get the zoom link for the gathering or for more details, or join our Facebook group**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2267212173588534/?ref=share>

You will then be invited to:

- Send in your questions for the MPs – questions will be taken in advance, with follow-up via the Zoom “Chat” facility
- Tell us what signs you have seen of a “Good Society” in the current situation, and
- What are your major concerns – for yourself and others?

### **Financial Giving**

Please remember to maintain your financial giving to the church as much as you are able. If you already pay by Direct Debit then that will continue as normal. If you use envelopes, please fill them each week and put them to one side to bring to church when we are able to meet again. If you put in cash, please also put this to one side, or keep a note of what you would have given and offer it when you come back to church. If you would like to set up a direct debit at this time please let me, or one of the other ministers know. An remember to Gift Aid if you can. It is really important that we maintain our income as much as possible – we will lose income from our regular users, yet our normal church expenses will continue much as always. So to be assured of our regular congregational giving is very important. Having said that, we recognise that the current situation may well impact some of you financially in a very challenging way and it is not our intention to make life more difficult for you. If your resources need to be diverted at this time, then we also understand that. ***Thanks to all who have already switched to Direct Debit.***



**Sunday 31 May 2020 - Pentecost**

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

**Opening Sentences**

Jesus breathed on them and said “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

On this day of Pentecost, the birthday of the Church, we shout with gladness, the Lord is here, his Spirit with us!

Hymn: Come down, O Love divine (Singing the Faith 372)

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here asking for God’s Spirit to come to you this morning, right where you are.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6HPKL1wOVXk>

Come down, O Love divine,  
seek thou this soul of mine,  
and visit it with thine own ardour glowing;  
O Comforter, draw near,  
within my heart appear,  
and kindle it, thy holy flame bestowing.

O let it freely burn,  
till earthly passions turn  
to dust and ashes, in its heat consuming;  
and let thy glorious light  
shine ever on my sight,  
and clothe me round, the while my path  
illuminating.

Let holy charity  
mine outward vesture be,  
and lowliness become mine inner clothing;  
true lowliness of heart,  
which takes the humbler part,  
and o'er its own shortcomings weeps with  
loathing.

And so the yearning strong,  
with which the soul will long,  
shall far outpass the power of human telling;  
for none can guess its grace,  
till he become the place  
wherein the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling

*Branco da Siena (d.1434) translated by Richard Frederick  
Littledale (1833 – 1890)*

Let us pray together

Loving God, we are constantly amazed that you come to us in new and exciting ways. On this day we remember how your Spirit came and empowered ordinary people to become the Church.

We would pray like a diverse crowd gathered in Jerusalem and demoralized disciples in an upper room, come Holy Spirit.

Holy Spirit of God, come to us now. Speak your peace to our hearts, send us your power, and your comfort that we may hear your call to us today and live as your people, today and always. Forgive us when we forget you are there and we struggle on in our own strength. Renew us and inspire us. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Our God is a gracious forgiving God. Jesus tells us we can start again. Our sins are forgiven. Thanks be to God.

**Today’s Reading from the New Testament**

Acts 2: 1 – 13

**Today’s Gospel Reading:** John 20: 19 – 23

## Time to Reflect

On Pentecost Sunday we have two pictures of how the Holy Spirit of God comes upon his people. In Jerusalem, people of many different nations and languages gathered together for a huge party. A mighty wind and flames of fire came upon them, they were full of excitement and energy, and they found themselves caught up in a new manifestation of God's power. The Church, of which we are a part, was born on this day. Of course, we cannot at the moment meet together in a church building and large gatherings are certainly not allowed, but we need to take time to celebrate we are part of something big that God hasn't finished with yet. What do you celebrate about your local church today? Are there large Christian gatherings you remember going to that have stayed with you?

The other picture is not about a large gathering, but is an upper room full of frightened and upset disciples after Jesus had died. Jesus appeared to them in their darkness, breathed on them, and said "receive the Holy Spirit." It was a pastoral gift to those who needed it in the state they found themselves in, reviving, restoring and putting them right. In these uncertain times, take time not just to remember the loud and vibrant coming of the Spirit to a vast crowd, but a quiet and gentle coming to us where we happen to find ourselves. On this day, we often use a slogan "the Church has left the building." In so many ways, the Church has done just that over the past few weeks, through looking after the vulnerable, supporting aid projects, keeping in touch with everyone and providing forms of worship like this one you share in with others today. What part of life do you need Jesus to breathe the Spirit into today? Take time to ask him to do just that.

God promises every day to put his Spirit in us so we can live. Today in exuberance and in

quietness we celebrate in confidence that the Lord is here, his Spirit is with us.

Take a time to sit quietly

## A time of prayer

After each bidding, "come Holy Spirit", you are invited to say "renew the whole creation."

On our world and its pain and uncertainty, come Holy Spirit.

On our nation, our Queen and our government, come Holy Spirit.

On the city, town or village in which we live, on those who keep us safe at the moment, come Holy Spirit.

On those who are frightened, unwell, alone, and especially those who are in the grip of Covid-19, come Holy Spirit.

On our church, on other churches we share with and the Church throughout the world, come Holy Spirit.

On each of us, right now, come Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

## The Lord's Prayer

*Our Father .....*

**Hymn: Listen to this worship song** or sing a verse of a hymn or song that comes to mind. As we ask Jesus to breathe new life in us, we recommit ourselves to be his Church, sharing his love and his peace.

Singing the Faith 371: Breathe on me, Spirit of Jesus.

[https://youtu.be/DMFZPqk2Q\\_Q](https://youtu.be/DMFZPqk2Q_Q)

Breathe on me, Spirit of Jesus. Breathe on me, Holy Spirit of God.

Fill me again, Spirit of Jesus. Fill me again, Holy Spirit of God.

Change my heart, Spirit of Jesus. Change my heart, Holy Spirit of God.

Bring peace to the world, Spirit of Jesus. Bring peace to the world, Holy Spirit of God

*Tina Pownall*

## **A prayer of blessing**

May God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, go with us now. May God's Spirit be on us, on those we love, and on those for whom we should pray, this Pentecost day and always.

Original materials by Rev. Ian Pruden; all hymns reproduced under CCLI 1144191.

## **Acts 2: 1 - 13**

### **The Coming of the Holy Spirit**

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.' All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' But others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine.'

## **John 20: 19 - 23**

### **Jesus Appears to the Disciples**

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'